

Message Text

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ACTION AGR-08

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DEPT PASS USDA/ARS; ROME FOR ERROS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TGEN OSCI EG

SUBJ: AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH COORDINATING COMMITTEE

REF: CAIRO 12294

1. SUMMARY: SCIATT MET WITH DR. SALAH EL ABD, SENIOR UNDERSECRETARY, MINAG, SEPTEMBER 21 TO HEAR MINISTRY PLANS TO ESTABLISH AN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH COORDINATING COMMITTEE TO REVIEW EGYPTIAN AGRICULTURAL RESERACH PROPOSALS (PARA 4 REFTEL). EL ABD SAID COMMITTEE IS TO BE ESTABLISHED BY MINISTERIAL DECREE ASAP. HE ASKED IF HE COULD HAVE ANY U.S. COMMENTS BY WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 27. END SUMMARY

2. COMMITTEE IS TO BE CHAIRED BY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION AND TO INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES OF UNIVERSITIES, THE EGYPTIAN ACADEMY/NAT. RESEARCH CENTER AND THE MINISTRY. THE COMMITTEE IS SUPPOSED TO:

(A) DEVELOP A COORDINATED ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH PLAN INVOLVING ALL SECTORS;

(B) CONDUCT EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP OF

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RESEARCH PROJECTS;

(C) REVIEW ALL RESEARCH PROPOSALS TO AVOID
DUPLICATION AND ENHANCE COORDINATION.

3. AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH TO BE PERFORMED IN THE
UNIVERSITIES AND THE ACADEMY/NRC AS WELL AS IN THE
MINISTRY IS TO BE REVIEWED BY THE COMMITTEE BEFORE
STARTING. ALL UNIVERSITY PROJECTS ARE TO BE APPROVED
BY THE APPROPRIATE FACULTY DEAN AND PERHAPS VICE
PRESIDENTS OF UNIVERSITIES BEFORE SUBMISSION TO THE
COMMITTEE. ACAD/NRC ARE TO BE APPROVED FIRST BY
THOSE BODIES AND ALL MINAG PROJECTS BY THE APPROPRIATE
AGRICULTURAL RESERACH CENTER DIRECTOR. AFTER
COMMITTEE REVIEW, PROPOSALS WOULD BE SENT TO EMBASSY
FOR FORWARDING TO ERROS/ARS.

4. SCIATT POINTED OUT TO EL ABD THAT ANY INTERNAL
REVIEW SYSTEM WOULD HAVE TO PRESERVE DIRECT LINKS
AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ARS AND THE EGYPTIAN
INSITUION, WHETHER UNIVERSITY OR MINISTRY, IN
BOTH NEGOTITATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECTS OR
THE RESEARCH WOULD SUFFER. EL ABD SAID THAT PRESENT
PROCEDURES WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED, EXECPT THAT THE
EGYPTIAN INSITUATION WOULD NOT START PRIOR TO
REVIEW COMPLETION (INJECTING AT THE LEAST ANOTHER
BUREAUCRATIC LAYER). HE ALSO SAID THAT ARS
CONTRACTS WOULD BE DIRECTLY WITH THE PERFORMING
INSTITUTIONM SCIATT PROMISED TO GET SUBSTANTIVE
COMMENTS TO EL ABD NEXT WEEK.

5. WE INTEND TO WRITE EL ABD LETTER RAISING
FOLLOWING MAIN POINTS:

(A) COMMITTEE, UNLESS IT HAS STAFF AND MEETS
FREQUENTLY, COULD CAUSE UNACCEPTABLE
DELAY IN PROCESSING PROPOSALS;
(B) ARS RESEARCH INTERESTS CANNOT BE DETERMINED
ENTIRELY BY EGYPTIAN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOP-
MENT PRIORITIES OR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
NEEDS. IF PROJECT REVIEW IS ALONG THESE
LINES SOLELY, THE RESEARCH PROGRAM WILL SUFFER;
(C) PROJECT NEGOTIATIONS WILL BECOME UNCERTAIN
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IF COMMITTEE MAKES FREQUENT CHANGES IN PROPOSALS;
(D) ESSENTIAL TO PRESERVE DIRECT RELATION IN
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION BETWEEN ARS AND
EGYPTIAN CO-INVESTIGATORS;
(E) WE CANNOT AGREE TO PROCEDURES WHICH WOULD
LEAD TO UNILATERAL GOE ATTEMPTS TO DICTATE
RESEARCH ARRANGEMENTS;
(F) SHOULD DEGREE ISSUE, EMBASSY WOULD LIKE

TO BE CONSULTED OR INFORMED DURING THE
PROCESS OF DEVELOPING PROCEDURES.

6. WE DO NOT WANT TO GET IN THE MIDDLE BY APPEARING
TO CHALLENGE AUTHORITY OF MINISTER TO ISSUE DECREE;
ON OTHER HAND WE WANT TO POINT OUT NEGATIVE EFFECTS
THAT A COMMITTEE MIGHT HAVE. GORDON CONCURS IN
THIS APPROACH. WE WOULD APPRECIATE USDA/ARS CONCURRENCE
OR COMMENTS ALSO. RESPONSE NEEDED BY SEPTEMBER 28.
IF AHINES, ARS , IS COMING TO EGYPT FIRST WEEK IN
OCTOBER, WE SUGGEST HE DISCUSS DECREE, PARTICULARLY
PROCEDURES , WITH MINAG.

7. COMMENT: EL ABD DID NOT SAY WHETHER UNIVERSITIES
AND ACADEMY HAVE AGREED TO COMMITTEE. IF THEY HAVE
NOT, GETTING A WORKABLE STRUCTURE WILL BE DIFFICULT.
MINHEALTH DECREE TO WHICH EL ABD REFERRED SEEMS TO
BE IGNORED OR UNHEARD OF BY MANY UNIVERSITY RESEARCHERS
WHO STILL NEGOTIATE PROJECTS WITH HEW AND NSF WITH
ONLY INTERNAL UNIVERSITY APPROVAL. EMBASSY IS
REQUESTING COPIES OF BOTH MINHEALTH AND DRAFT MINAG
DECREES.

8. WE DO NOT FEEL THAT PROPOSED DECREE IS, IN
ITSELF, CONTRARY TO AMBASSADOR'S AGREEMENT WITH
MINISTER OF STATE MOHAMED RIAD ON PROCESSING OF
PL-RIP PROPOSALS SINCE MINAG , UNLIKE MFA, IS GOE
TECHNICAL AGENCY PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR AGRICULTURAL
SECTOR AND ALSO FOR BULK OF EXISTING RESERACH.
IT IS ALREADY REVIEWING MOST PROJECTS. COMMITTEE
WOULD BE A NEW MECHANISM TO ACCOMPLISH THIS
FUNCTION. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT THIS MECHANISM
MIGHT ACTURALLY IMPEDE THE PROCESS.
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9. FORMATION OF THE COMMITTEE PROBABLY PRECIPITATED
BY THE BADRAN CONTROVERSY (REFTEL) AND ALLEGATIONS
THAT UNIVERSITY RESEARCH WAS UNKNOWN TO MINAG.
HOWEVER, BADRAN SAYS THAT HE HAD, HIMSELF, CONSIDERED
FORMING SUCH A COMMITTEE WHEN HE WAS MINSTER.
MATTHEWS

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